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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Telcon with President of Russia (U)

PARTICIPANTS: The President
President Putin

Notetakers: Mark Robinson and David Lee

Interpreter: Peter Afanasenko

DATE, TIME: February 1, 2003, 1:44 - 1:48 p.m. EST
AND PLACE: Residence

The President: Vladimir, thank you for calling. (U)

President Putin: George, it seems that it is only once a year that we get a chance to call each other and congratulate each other with a nice event like Christmas. The rest of the time it's either about other matters or a tragedy. This is a horribly tragic event that strikes one right in the heart. I can imagine that with all of the other things that you have right now, you didn't need this one. We are so sorry about the people who died. In addition, we have been cooperating in this area so closely and for so long. Our space people are clearly suffering. Our space specialists feel that they and your people are all members of the same team. We take this as our own tragedy with, literally tears in our eyes. I embrace you and please pass on our deepest condolences to the American people from all of us. (S)

The President: Thanks, Vladimir. I am honored that you called me and in tough times it seems that you are always the one to call first. I have spoken to the families of those who perished and I am going to go on TV to address the American people about our heartfelt grief. I want to thank you for sharing in that grief. No doubt we are on the same team on many things, but at the same time, the world sees most clearly how we are together when we cooperate in the exploration of space. Now our cooperation will have to be even closer because we have two Americans and one Russian who are on the space station. Our experts will have to work even closer. I will speak to the head

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Reason: 1.5(d)
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(of our space program. So the great Russian space program and the U.S. program will have to make sure that they have all of the provisions and everything they need up there. Stay in touch, and I thank you for your support. It means a lot. (S)

President Putin: George, you have a strong nature, and I know that you will preserve and cope with this. I embrace you. (S)

The President: Thanks for your call friend. I will be talking to you soon. Good-bye. (U)

-- End of Conversation --

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